it works

MY BAG	MY WORKOUT	MY DIET	MY STYLE	MY PASSION
Todd Richards, snowboarder	Jim Merlis, music publicist	Richard Ellenbogen, M.D., surgeon	Jeffrey Kalinsky, retailer	Akhil Sharma, author

my cause **wynton marsalis**

Hometown Hero

When Katrina blew into the Big Easy, Wynton Marsalis sounded the reveille

The man Wynton Marsalis, 45

The call On the morning of August 29, 2005, a phone call woke Marsalis in his New York apartment. On the other end of the line was Marc Morial, the former mayor of Marsalis's hometown, New Orleans. "He said, 'Man, we've got a big problem back in the crib. It's a worst-case scenario,'" remembers Marsalis. "He's not the kind of person who gets overly emotional or panicky. When I heard him say that...my heart just sank."

The response The Grammy-winning trumpeter called an old musician friend who was now a police officer who was watching the chaos unfold at the convention center. "I asked him if we should get into a van and come down to play, just to do something," Marsalis recalls. "He said, 'Listen man, now is not the time for that. If you ain't coming down here with water for people to drink, don't come." It wasn't until André Guess, an executive at Lincoln Center, suggested a benefit concert that Marsalis saw the clear path toward helping out. "Initially, I didn't propose it, because I didn't want to tax our organization," says Marsalis, who serves as artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center. "We'd just moved into a new building, which had already put a tremendous strain on our finances, but everyone here was behind it." He received a thousand calls in two weeks from musicians, friends, and strangers, asking how they could help. The Higher Ground Hurricane Relief Fund Benefit Concert, a live telethon filmed at Lincoln Center, raised $3 million.

The advice If you have the time and the means, head down South—stay in the hotels, dine in the restaurants, and listen to the music, says Marsalis. Conditions aren't as bad as you might believe. "I'm not belittling what happened—it was a tragedy of mammoth proportions—but it's not something that's insurmountable," he says. The rebuilding programs themselves are still in their infancy, which means there's room for every American to pitch in. "There isn't necessarily a central intelligence solving the problem, but that makes it a good time for everyone to get involved using whatever they're good at. If you're a laborer, an accountant, a strategist, they all need your help," offers Marsalis. "I do all that I can, and all of my work is through music because that's what I do."

The payoff Marsalis has found that working with New Orleans musicians who have been spread around the country has given him a new way to stay directly connected to his artistic community. "Rebuilding houses and the environment is obviously the most important thing to address, but before the economy is rebuilt, it's important to rebuild the arts. Art and culture are a way to remind people what their reasons for living are. They're your traditions, your history, and a way to survive throughout time." BILL KEITH

YOU CAN DO THIS How you can help rebuild New Orleans

CONNECT The need is so great in New Orleans that it can be difficult to decide how to best serve the community and whom to contact. New Orleans Rising (*neworleansrising.org*) is designed to put locals in need in touch with one another as well as those outside the city who want to help. There you can find individuals and organizations that match your interests and skills. **VISIT** The easiest way to give the Crescent City some love is to vacation there. Most of the city's restaurants and hotels have reopened, and the Convention & Visitors Bureau's comprehensive Web site makes travel planning easy. *neworleanscvb.com*

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